

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, April 17, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "DATES ON EGGS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

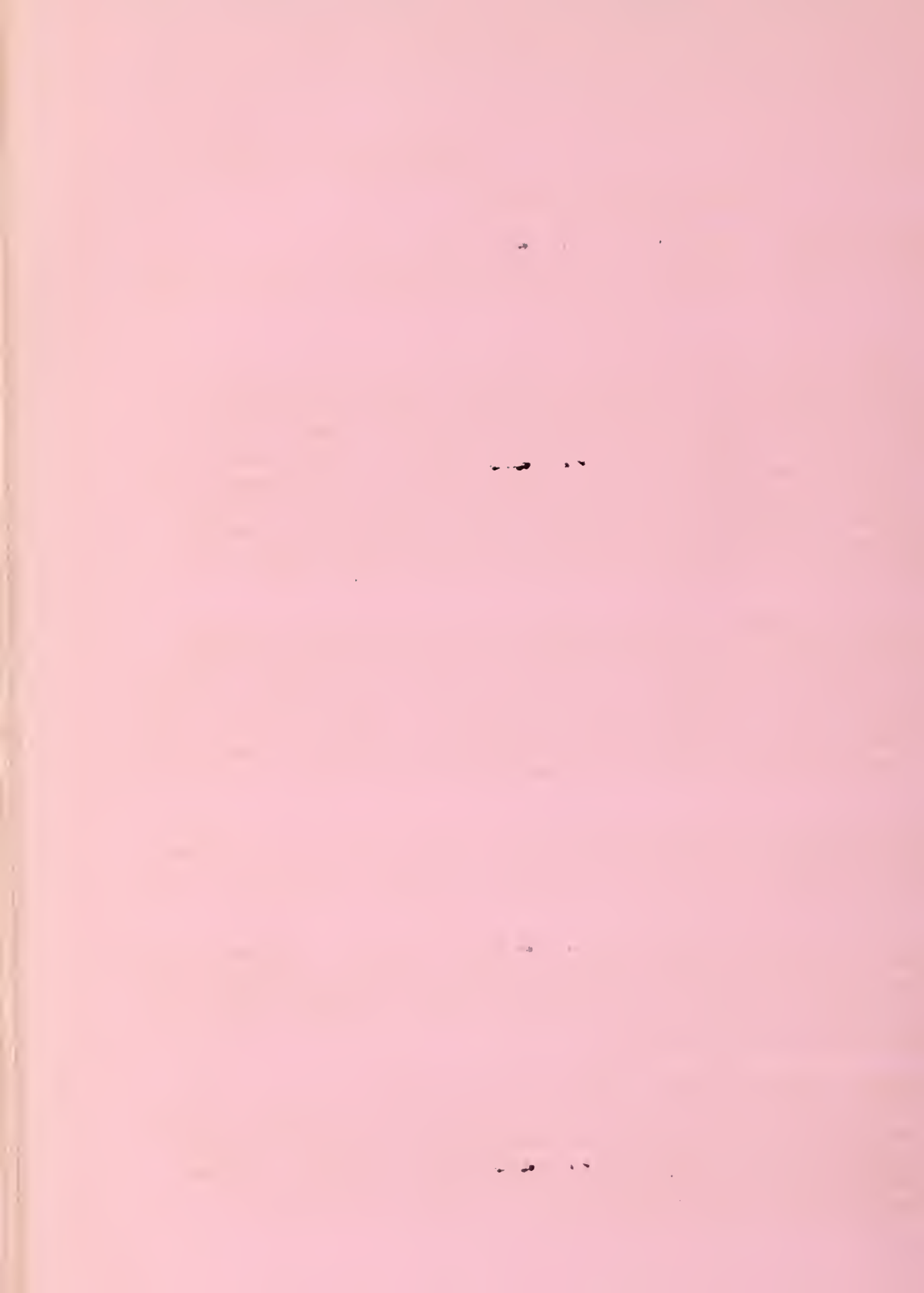
Have you ever heard of going marketing with an eye out for dates? That's what many housekeepers who are purchasing eggs these days watch for -- the date on the package of eggs. Dated eggs are coming into their own -- Government-graded eggs with a dated certificate of quality. Dated eggs have been on sale in many places for years. But they are now in wide demand. And in response to consumer approval, more and more producers and dealers are grading by Government standards, under Federal-State supervision. Sometimes you will find 2 dates on the package of eggs -- one the date of grading, and the other the date beyond which retailers should not sell those eggs.

You can see why graded, dated eggs appeal to housekeepers. Different grades suit different purposes. So the housewife wants some guarantee that she is getting the quality she expects in the particular lot she buys. Suppose she wants eggs to poach for breakfast, then she'll want the very freshest eggs -- Grade A or Grade AA. But if she wants eggs to scramble, or eggs for cup cakes or custard, they need not be as fresh as poaching eggs. Grade B or even Grade C perhaps will be good enough and will be less expensive than Grades A or AA naturally.

Grading eggs is such a simple process that it can be done on the farm and often is. Grading is simply sorting the eggs according to quality and size, and packing eggs of different quality in their own separate containers.

A simple process called "candling" is the approved way of judging quality in eggs. Candling is holding the egg before a strong light and noting the condition of the air cell, the yolk, the white, and the germ. Nowadays the light for candling is no longer a candle as it used to be, but an electric light, kerosene lamp, gas flame or even sunlight.

When a Federal or Federal-State grader does the grading, he seals the package of eggs with a label certifying to the quality of the contents on that date. The services of an official grader are available to egg producers and dealers in many markets and many places for a small fee. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture furnishes this service in cooperation with State authorities.



The farm is the place to eliminate all poor-quality eggs. From the time the eggs leave the farm, the care they receive and their age determines their quality as they reach the consumer. Some eggs go direct from the farm to the household that uses them. This direct trade is necessarily local and only such local sources can furnish real "24-hour eggs." Many farmers sell to jobbers or wholesalers who in turn sell to the retail store -- by which time the eggs are older, of course. Great quantities of eggs are sold to packers and shippers who send them to distant markets in car-lots. As most of the egg farms are in the Middle West, eastern cities do not get these eggs until they have passed through several hands and by the time they reach consumers in New York, for example, the eggs are as much as 3 weeks old.

Because the quality of the eggs is gradually changing as they grow older, most of the commercial shipments are graded when the wholesaler receives them, and dated then. While in the store the very best eggs -- Grade AA or "Special" by Government standards -- may remain in that grade 3 or 4 days if the store keeps them properly. After that, those Grade AA eggs belong in the Grade A or "Extra" class for the next 5 or 6 days. Then they will be Grade B or "Standard" and remain so about 10 days. Finally, they will be Grade C or "Trade" quality. This last grade goes down more rapidly and in 3 or 4 days becomes inedible. You may be interested to know that the packaged eggs shipped from the Middle West to New York and other East Coast cities and kept under ordinary conditions during their 3-weeks' trip -- these eggs are mostly Grade B by the time they appear on the city markets.

Now about the characteristics of eggs of these different Government grades. First-quality eggs have a strong, sound shell free from any cracks or checks, regular in shape, and clean -- for dirty eggs spoil more rapidly than clean eggs. The air cell at the large end of the egg is small -- not over an eighth of an inch in depth -- and is fixed in position. (Large air cells indicate possible staleness, and freely movable ones indicate broken shell membranes.) The yolk in a first-quality egg shows very dimly before the candling light and has very little freedom of motion. When the egg is broken, the yolk will stand up well, in rounded shape. As for the white, that will be firm and clear and will not spread out much when the egg is broken. The germ spot will have no development whatever.

Such an egg is Grade AA or "Special". But naturally not very many of these first-quality eggs can be on the markets. They can't be gathered and delivered as rapidly as that to any but a local market. However, you will find plenty of Grade A or "Extra" eggs for sale and the difference between A and AA is hardly noticeable. The air cell is a trifle deeper (one-fourth inch instead of one-eighth), and the yolk and white do not stand up quite so firmly. In Grade B or "Standard" eggs these changes are a little more marked, and in Grade C or "Trade" eggs even more so.

Dated eggs usually carry on the label information as to their size as well as their quality. Some are marked "Large"; others "Medium" or "Small". Eggs marked "Large" have to weigh at least 24 ounces to the dozen, the "Medium" eggs at least 20 and a half ounces. The "Small" eggs are those falling below the medium size.

#####

